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OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE.

INFORMATION FROM ABROAD.

VIEWS

OF

ADMIRAL CERVERA

REGARDING

THE SPANISH NAVY IN THE LATE WAR.

NOVEMBER, 1898.

NAVY DEPARTMENT.

OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE.

WASHINGTON:
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INTRODUCTORY.

Under the title "Vindication of the Navy" there appeared in the La Epoca Madrid, November 5, 1898, this article, which is made up mainly of extracts from letters from Admiral Cervera, written previous to the declaration of war and continued to May 5. These letters were written by Admiral Cervera in protest against Spain rushing into war in face of certain defeat, due to the naval strength of the United States and the unpreparedness of the Spanish navy.

Cervera writes: "I ask myself if it is right for me to keep silent, and thereby make myself an accomplice in adventures which will surely cause the total ruin of Spain. And for what purpose? To defend an island which was ours but belongs to us no more, because even if we should not lose it by right in the war, we have lost it in fact, and with it all wealth and an enormous number of young men, victims of the climate and bullets, in the defense of what is now no more than a romantic ideal. Furthermore, I believe that this opinion of mine should be known to the Queen, and by the whole council of ministers.

" * * * If our correspondence of the last two months is looked over it will be seen not that I have been a prophet, but that I have fallen short of the true mark. Let us not have any illusions as to what we can do. * * *

"I have deemed it my duty to express my opinions to the proper authorities clearly and without beating around the bush. Now, let orders be given to me; I will carry them out with energy and decision. I am ready for the worst."

Spain had neglected her navy, and Cervera shows it was imprudent for her to attempt war against a superior naval power.

RICHARDSON CLOVER,
Chief Intelligence Officer.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE,
~~April~~ *29, 1898.*
Nov.

THE VINDICATION OF THE NAVY.

(From "La Epoca," Madrid, November 5, 1898.)

The first judgment of a part of the public concerning the conduct of the navy in the combats of Cavite and Santiago has been already much modified. In the face of the evidence of official reports; of the praises and expressions of respect and admiration of the victors toward those who fought against them under disadvantageous circumstances; of the technical explanations given by foreign and Spanish scientific authorities, the unjust accusations of the first few days have faded away.

But still more complete must be the vindication of the navy, which has been treated with unjust severity and manifest partiality, when justice compels us to acknowledge that in all the events of the war the navy has done all that could be asked of it, considering its limited means; and that not only has it done its duty in naval actions, but it has also assisted the action of the land forces, as for instance in Santiago, now mounting and serving the batteries, which made it possible to prolong the resistance of the city, now landing its crews and fighting in the trenches so heroically that it was these naval forces that suffered the greatest losses.

As regards Admiral Cervera and his conduct from the time he took command of the fleet until the terrible battle of Santiago, we feel sure that not only will the supreme council of war and marine recognize that he carried the fulfillment of duty to the last possible extreme, but also that public opinion will have to atone to him for the injustice with which he has been treated, and will surround him with the respect deserved by those who, subordinating every consideration to the love of their country, pointed out to those who were blind the abyss toward which they were conducting the nation. His advice and representations were not heeded, and he heroically complied with the law of obedience, under which are all who wear the honorable military uniform.

We will not refer, for the present, to the battle of Santiago, which is now *sub judice*, but full light will be thrown upon this subject in due time. But previous events demonstrate the forethought of Rear Admiral Cervera and the lamentable blindness of those who would not hear him, and are sufficient for the vindication of the sailors of Santiago.

From documents known by many chiefs and officers of the navy it appears that Admiral Cervera expressed himself always ready to give absolute obedience to the orders of the government; that he pointed out the dangers of a disastrous war with the United States while it was still possible to avoid it; that he repeatedly reported the deficiencies in the vessels under his command; that he persistently offered to come to Madrid to explain to the council of ministers the reasons why our fleet was going to certain destruction; that he was not allowed to explain these reasons to those about to take upon themselves the enormous responsibility of this war; that he was forced to sail without a war plan, against his opinion and that of all the commanders of the fleet, who signed a solemn protest declining the responsibility of the consequences; that finally many of the elements indispensable to put the ships in a fair condition were not supplied to him; that the *Colón* sailed without her turret artillery, and some of the Bilbao cruisers with some of the pieces and ammunition defective, and at least one of them with her speed very much reduced on account of the state of her bottom.

Though they possessed such conclusive and justifying documents, those officers had the self-denial, the patriotism, and the spirit of discipline not to reply to the attacks made against them, thus setting a fine example which is very rare in these times of personal and corps egotism, general insubordination, and wild passions. This noble conduct makes it still more necessary to give full satisfaction to the navy by making public, when the Cortes meet, all the official correspondence exchanged between Admiral Cervera and the minister of marine, as well as the supplementary private documents bearing on the subject.

We have had occasion to see some of these documents, and we wish to anticipate that justification, and to show that in reality it was not Cervera who lost the fleet, but those who, against the opinion of the Admiral and the commanders of the fleet, without even hearing Cervera's representations, sent the vessels to fight under such conditions that they *had* to perish, thus sacrificing to the vain and noisy outcry of our jingoes the best vessels of Spain and the lives of hundreds of brave men.

Present circumstances prevent us, at this time, from making known much interesting data. However, the following is quite sufficient, we believe, to form a more just opinion of our navy.

In January, 1898, Admiral Cervera wrote to one of his relatives:

DEFICIENCIES OF THE NAVAL INDUSTRY.

"About two years ago I wrote you a letter concerning our condition to go to war with the United States. I requested you to keep that letter in case some day it should be necessary to bring it

to light in defense of my memory or myself when we had experienced the sad disappointment prepared for us by the stupidity of some, the cupidity of others, and the incapability of all, even of those with the best of intentions.

"To-day we find ourselves again in one of those critical periods which seem to be the beginning of the end, and I write you again to express my point of view and to explain my action in this matter, and I beg you to put this letter with the other one, so that the two may be my military testament.

"The relative military positions of Spain and the United States has grown worse for us, because we are extenuated, absolutely penniless, and they are very rich, and also because we have increased our naval power only with the *Colón* and the torpedo destroyers, and they have increased theirs much more.

"What I have said of our industry is sadly confirmed in everything we look at. There is the *Cataluña*, begun more than eight years ago, and her hull is not yet completed. And this when we are spurred on by danger, which does not wake patriotism in anybody, while jingoism finds numerous victims, perhaps myself to-morrow. And the condition of our industry is the same in all the arsenals.

"Let us consider, now, our private industries. The Maquinista Terrestre y Maritima supplies the engines of the *Alfonso XIII*; Cadiz the *Filipinas*. If the *Carlos V* is not a dead failure, she is not what she should be; everything has been sacrificed to speed, and she lacks power. And remember, that the construction is purely Spanish. The Company of La Graña has not completed its ships, as I am told. Only the *Vizcaya*, *Oquendo*, and *Maria Teresa* are good ships of their class; but, though constructed at Bilbao, it was by Englishmen. Thus, manifestly, even victory would be a sad thing for us. As for the administration and its intricacies, let us not speak of that; its slow procedure is killing us. The *Vizcaya* carries a 14-cm. breech-plug which was declared useless two months ago, and I did not know it until last night. And that because an official inquiry was made. How many cases I might mention! But my purpose is not to accuse, but to explain why we may and must expect a disaster. But as it is necessary to go to the bitter end, and as it would be a crime to say that publicly to-day, I hold my tongue, and go forth resignedly to face the trials which God may be pleased to send me. I am sure that we will do our duty, for the spirit of the navy is excellent; but I pray God that the troubles may be arranged without coming to a conflict which, in any way, I believe would be disastrous for us."

STATE OF THE FLEET.

In the beginning of February Admiral Cevera wrote to a high official personage:

"Although I am sure that I am telling you nothing new, I think it is not idle, in these critical times, to make a study of the condition of the fleet. We must discount the *Alfonso XIII*, so many years under trials that it appears we shall not have the pleasure ever to count it among our vessels of war. The fleet is reduced to the three Bilbao cruisers, the *Colón*, the *Destructor*, and the torpedo destroyers *Furor* and *Terror*. The three Bilbao battle ships are practically complete, but the 14-cm. artillery, the main power of these vessels, is practically useless, on account of the bad system of its breech mechanism, and the bad quality of the cartridge cases, of which there are only those on board.

"The *Colón*, which is undoubtedly the best of all our ships from a military point of view, has not received her guns. The *Destructor* may serve as a scout, although its speed is not very high for this service in the fleet. The *Furor* and *Terror* are in a good condition, but I doubt if they can make effective use of their 75-mm. pieces. As for the supplies necessary for a fleet, we frequently lack even the most necessary. In this arsenal (Cadiz) we have not been able to coal, and both at Barcelona and Cadiz we could only obtain half of the biscuit we wanted, and that only because I had ordered 8,000 kilos to be made here. We have no charts of the American seas, although I suppose that they have been ordered; but at the present time we could not move. Apart from this deficient state of the material, I have the pleasure to state that the spirit of the personnel is excellent, and that the country will find it all that it may choose to demand. It is a pity that a lack of better and more abundant material, greater supplies, and less hindrances are wanting to put this personnel in a condition to amply carry out its role!"

* * * * * * *

"I note," said the Admiral in another letter, "what I am told concerning the heavy artillery of the *Colón*. It is to be very much regretted that there is always so much underhand work about everything, and that there should be so much of it now regarding the acceptance of the 254-mm. guns, because if we finally take them, it will seem that we are yielding to certain disagreeable impositions, and if things come to the worst, it seems to me we will have to accept, as the proverb says, 'hard bread rather than none'; and if we have no other guns, and these ones can fire at least 25 or 30 shots, we will have to take them anyhow, even though they are expensive and inefficient. And we must not lose time, so that the

vessel may be armed and supplied with ammunition as soon as possible."

Some time afterwards, when matters were getting worse and worse, the Admiral was more explicit still. Shortly after the Dupuy de Lome incident he said:

"I do not know when the *Pelayo* and the *Carlos V* will be able to join the fleet, but I suspect that they will not arrive in time. Of the first one I know nothing at all, but I have received some news concerning the second one, and certainly not very satisfactory as regards the time it will take for it to be ready. It seems to me that there is a mistake in the calculation of the forces we may count upon in the sad event of a war with the United States. In the Cadiz division I believe the *Numancia* will be lacking. I do not think we can count on the *Lepanto*. Of the *Carlos V* and the *Pelayo* I have already spoken. The *Colón* has not yet received her artillery, and if war comes, she will be caught without her heavy artillery. The eight principal vessels of the Havana station have no military value whatever, and, besides, are badly worn out, therefore they can be of very little use. In saying this I am not moved by a fault-finding spirit, but only by a desire to avoid illusions that may cost us very dear.

"Taking things as they are, however sad it may be, it is seen that our naval force when compared with that of the United States is approximately in the proportion of 1 to 3. It therefore seems to me a dream, almost a feverish fancy, to think that with this force, extenuated by our long wars, we can establish the blockade of any port of the United States. A campaign against them will have to be, at least for the present, a defensive or a disastrous one, unless we have some alliances, in which case the tables may be turned. As for the offensive, all we could do would be to make some raids with our fast vessels in order to do them as much harm as possible. It is frightful to think of the results of a naval battle, even if it should be a successful one for us, for how and where would we repair our damages? I, however, will not refuse to do what may be judged necessary, but I think it convenient to analyze the situation such as it is, without cherishing illusions which may bring about terrible disappointments."

COMPARISON OF THE FLEETS.

The comparison of both navies, based upon the studies made in prevision of a war with the United States, suggested to the Admiral the following considerations on February 25, 1898:

"If we compare the Navy of the United States with our own, counting only modern vessels capable of active service,

we find that the United States have the battle ships *Iowa*, *Indiana*, *Massachusetts*, *Oregon*, and *Texas;* the armored cruisers *Brooklyn* and *New York;* the protected cruisers *Atlanta*, *Minneapolis*, *Baltimore*, *Charleston*, *Chicago*, *Cincinnati*, *Columbia*, *Newark*, *San Francisco*, *Olympia*, *Philadelphia*, and *Raleigh*, and the rapid unprotected cruisers *Detroit*, *Marblehead*, and *Montgomery*. Against this we have, following the same classification, the battle ships *Pelayo*, *Infanta Maria Teresa*, *Vizcaya*, and *Oquendo*, armored cruiser *Colón*, and protected cruisers *Carlos V*, *Alfonso XIII*, and *Lepanto;* no fast unprotected cruisers; and all this supposing the *Pelayo*, *Carlos V*, and *Lepanto* to be ready in time, and giving the desired value to the *Alfonso XIII*. I do not mention the other vessels on account of their small military value, surely inferior to that of the nine gunboats, from 1,000 to 1,600 tons each, six monitors still in service, the ram *Katahdin*, the *Vesuvius*, and the torpedo boats and destroyers, which I do not count. I believe that in the present form the comparison is accurate enough.

"Comparing the displacements, we find that in battle ships the United States have 41,589 tons against our 30,917 tons; in armored cruisers they have 17,471 tons against our 6,840; in protected cruisers 51,098 against 18,887, and in fast unprotected cruisers they have 6,287 and we none. The total of vessels good for all kinds of operations comprise 116,445 tons against 56,644 tons, or something less than one-half.

"In speed our battle ships are superior to theirs, but not to their armored cruisers. In other vessels their speed is superior to ours.

"Comparing the artillery, and admitting that it is possible to fire every ten minutes the number of shots stated in the respective reports, and that only one-half of the pieces of less than 20 cm. are fired, and supposing that the efficiency of each shot of the calibers 32, 30, 28, 25, 20, 16, 15, 14, 12, 10, 17.5, 5.7, 4.7, and 3.7 be represented by the figures 328, 270, 220, 156, 80, 41, 33, 27, 17, 10, 4, 2, and 1, which are the hundredths of the cubes of the numbers representing their calibers expressed in centimeters $\left(\frac{(\text{caliber in cm.})^3}{100}\right)$, we find that the artillery power of the American battle ships is represented by 43,822, and that of ours by 29,449; that of the American armored cruisers by 13,550, and that of ours (*Colón*) by 6,573; that of the American protected cruisers by 62,725, and that of ours by 14,600; that of the American unprotected cruisers by 12,300. Therefore, according to these figures, the offensive power of the artillery of the United States vessels will be represented by 132,397, and that of ours by 50,622, or a little less than two-fifths of the enemy's.

"To arrive at this appalling conclusion I have already said that it has been necessary to count the *Pelayo* and *Carlos V*, which probably will not be ready in time; the *Lepanto*, which surely will not be ready, and the *Alfonso XIII*, whose speed renders her of a very doubtful utility.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF AN OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGN.

"Now, to carry out any serious operations in a maritime war, the first thing necessary is to secure control of the sea, which can only be done by defeating the enemy's fleet, or rendering them powerless by blockading them in their military ports. Can we do this with the United States? It is evident to me that we can not. And even if God should grant us a great victory, against what may be reasonably expected, where and how would we repair the damages sustained? Undoubtedly the port would be Havana, but with what resources? I am not aware of the resources existing there, but judging by this department, where everything is scarce, it is to be assumed that the same condition exists everywhere, and that the immediate consequences of the first great naval battle would be the enforced inaction of the greater part of our fleet for the rest of the campaign, whatever might be the result of that great combat. In the meantime the enemy would repair its damages inside of its fine rivers, and aided by its powerful industries and enormous resources. This lack of industries and stores on our part renders it impossible to carry on an offensive campaign.

* * * * * * *

"If the control of the sea remains in the hands of our adversaries, they will immediately make themselves masters of any unfortified port which they may want in the island of Cuba, counting, as they do, on the insurgents, and will use them as a base for their operations against us. The transportation of troops to Cuba would be most difficult and the success very doubtful, and the insurrection, without the check of our army, which would gradually give way, and with the aid of the Americans, would rapidly increase and become more formidable.

"These reflections are very sad; but I believe it to be my unavoidable duty to set aside all personal considerations and loyally to represent to my country the resources which I believe to exist, so that, without illusions, it may weigh the considerations for and against, and then, through the government of His Majesty, which is the country's legitimate organ, it may pronounce its decision. I am sure that this decision will find in all of us energetic, loyal, and decided executors. Our motto is 'the fulfillment of duty.'"

MORE DEFICIENCIES—THE COUNTRY MUST BE TOLD THE TRUTH.

On February 26 the Admiral wrote the following:

"When I received yesterday the letter in which, among other things, you asked me if the *Colón* could go out for target practice, I answered that the vessel was ready, and at the same time I took measures so that the cartridge cases which might be used in that practice should be recharged, but it appears that there is no furnace in which they can be reannealed, or a machine to reform the cartridge cases. The extra charges which the vessel brought (72 per gun) are therefore useless.

"I send to-day the official letter which I announced yesterday. Its conclusions are indeed afflicting, but can we afford to cherish illusions? Do we not owe to our country not only our life if necessary, but the exposition of our beliefs? I am very uneasy about this. I ask myself if it is right for me to keep silent, and thereby make myself an accomplice in adventures which will surely cause the total ruin of Spain. And for what purpose? To defend an island which was ours but belongs to us no more, because even if we should not lose it by right in the war, we have lost it in fact, and with it all our wealth and an enormous number of young men, victims of the climate and bullets, in the defense of what is now no more than a romantic ideal. Furthermore, I believe that this opinion of mine should be known by the Queen, and by the whole council of ministers."

That this thoughtful and patriotic advice was not favorably received by the government is shown by the following letter a few days afterwards:

"Yesterday I received your letter of the 28th, and I regret very much the painful impressions caused by my remarks; but I am not surprised, because they are truly sad, and still, perhaps, they fall beneath the mark, judging from everything one sees. Just now we have another proof of this in the fact that the difficulty of obtaining cartridge cases for the *Colón* arises from the want of means (money), and this on the eve, perhaps, of a war against the richest nation in the world. I do not wish to dwell too much on this point, for no practical result could be obtained. But every detail points out either our lack of means or our defective organization, and, above all, our utter lack of preparation.

"I have deemed it my duty to express my opinions to the proper authorities clearly and without beating around the bush. Now let orders be given to me; I will carry them out with energy and decision. I am ready for the worst."

MORE DATA REGARDING OUR INFERIORITY—DANGER TO THE PHILIPPINES.

"An examination of our forces," said the Admiral on March 25, "based upon what I already know and upon recent information and observation, not only confirms what I said, but shows it to be still worse. I have visited the *Vitoria*, on which I counted, and from my visit I have drawn the conviction that we can not count on her for the present conflict. Neither does my information permit me to count on the *Pelayo*, *Carlos V*, or *Numancia*. And yet, as this opinion is not based upon personal observation, I include them in the inclosed statement. Whatever may be the direction given to the conflict, either war, negotiations direct, or through a third party, an arbitrator or otherwise, the longer the decision is delayed the worse it will be for us. If it is war, the longer it takes to come the more exhausted we will be. If it is negotiation of any kind, the longer it is postponed the greater will be the demands, each time more irritating, which will be presented by the United States, and to which we will have to yield in order to gain time in the vain hope of improving our military position. And as our position can not be improved, let us see what we can expect from a war under such conditions.

"It would be foolish to deny that what we may reasonably expect is defeat, which may be glorious, but all the same, defeat, which would cause us to lose the island in the worst possible manner. But even supposing an improbability, that is, that we should obtain a victory, that would not change the final result of the campaign. The enemy would not declare itself defeated, and it would be foolish for us to pretend to overcome the United States in wealth and production. They would recover easily, while we would die of exhaustion, although victorious, and the ultimate result would be always a disaster. Only in case we could count on some powerful ally could we aspire to obtain a satisfactory result.

"But, besides having to discount the high price to be paid for such an alliance, even then we would only be postponing the present conflict for a few years, when it would become graver than it is to-day, as is the present insurrection in comparison with the last.

"Even admitting the possibility of retaining Cuba, this island would cost us enormous sacrifices by the necessity of being constantly armed to the teeth. And here the problem already pointed out by somebody arises: Is the island worth the ruin of Spain? (Silvela in Burgos.) I do not speak on the subject of privateering, because it seems to me that no man acquainted with history can attach any value to privateering enterprises, which nowadays are almost impossible on account of the character of modern vessels.

"The accompanying statement shows that our forces in the Atlantic are approximately one-half of those of the United States, both as regards tonnage and artillery power. I have never thought of the forces which the United States have in the Pacific and Asia in connection with the development of events in the West Indies; but I have always considered these forces a great danger for the Philippines, which have not even a shadow of a resistance to oppose to them. And as regards the American coasts of the Pacific, the United States have no anxiety about them. I think you are mistaken in believing that during the month of April our situation will change. As I have said above, I am sure that neither the *Carlos V*, the *Pelayo*, the *Vitoria*, or the *Numancia* will be ready, and nobody knows how we will be as regards 14-cm. ammunition. It seems sure that by the end of April the 254-mm. guns of the *Colón* will not be mounted. Even if I were mistaken, then our available forces in the West Indies would be 49 per cent of that of the Americans in tonnage, and 47 per cent in artillery.

"Our only superiority would be in torpedo boats and destroyers, provided all of them arrive there in good order.

"I do not know exactly what are the sentiments of the people concerning Cuba, but I am inclined to believe that the immense majority of Spaniards wish for peace above all things. But those who so think are the ones who suffer and weep inside of their own houses, and do not talk so loud as the minority who profit by the continuation of this state of affairs. However, this is a subject which it is not for me to analyze.

"Our want of means is such that some days ago three men went overboard while manning the rail for saluting, through the breaking of an old awning line. A new line had been asked for fifty days ago, but it has not yet been replaced. In old times, forty-three days after the *Hernan Cortes* was laid down the vessel was at sea. It is now fifty-one days since I requested the changing of certain tubes in the boilers of a steam launch of the *Teresa*, and I do not yet know when it will be done. This will probably be the proportion between us and the United States in the repair of damages, in spite of our having the Havana dock, which is the principal thing, but not all. As for the crews, I do not know them, but I may say that the crews that defeated our predecessors at Trafalgar had been recruited in the same way.

"This is my loyal opinion, and for the sake of the nation I express it to the Government. If it is thought advisable for me to express it personally, I am ready to start at the first intimation. After I have done this, thus relieving my conscience of a heavy weight, I am quite ready to fulfill the comparatively easy duty of conducting our forces wherever I may be ordered, being sure that all of them will do their duty.

NORTH ATLANTIC SQUADRON.

SPAIN.

Protected vessels actually there, or unprotected but with a speed of over 15 miles:

	Displacement.	Artillery.
Vizcaya	7,000	6,130
Oquendo	7,000	6,130
Marques de la Ensenada	1,064	1,000

UNITED STATES.

Same kind of vessels:

New York	8,200	6,400
Indiana	10,288	9,304
Massachusetts	10,288	9,304
Texas	6,315	550
Brooklyn	9,271	7,880
Iowa	11,410	8,360
Montgomery	2,089	4,100
Marblehead	2,089	4,100
Detroit	2,089	4,100
Terror	3,600	2,896
	65,639	60,994

To these may be positively added:

SPAIN.

Infanta Maria Teresa	7,000	6,130
Cristóbal Colón	6,840	8,490*
Alfonso XIII	4,826	4,340
	18,666	18,960

UNITED STATES.

Minneapolis	7,375	4,790
Columbia	7,375	4,790
	14,750	9,580

Doubtful additions:

SPAIN.

Pelayo	9,917	6,987
Carlos V	9,260	5,620
	19,167	12,607
Atlanta	3,000	4,270
Charleston	3,730	4,570
Chicago	4,500	4,470
Newark	4,098	6,740
Philadelphia	4,324	7,640
Dolphin	1,485	700
Yorktown	1,703	3,320
	22,840	31,710

In the South Atlantic they have:

Cincinnati	3,200	4,795

All the other vessels have very little military value, with the exception of the torpedo boats and destroyers, not mentioned in this statement, including the "Katahdin" and "Vesuvius."

* Without the 25-cm. guns, the value of which is represented by 1,248.

CERVERA WISHED TO EXPLAIN HIS OPINION TO THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

Admiral Cervera's already expressed desire to personally inform the council of ministers was still more clearly expressed under date of March 16.

"Yesterday I received your favor of the day before, by which I see that our opinions agree concerning the conflict which threatens our unfortunate country. As both of us are animated by the best desires, such agreement was sure to come. It also appears that the whole government participates in this opinion, but I am afraid that there may be some minister who, while believing that we are not in favorable conditions, may have been dazzled by the names of the vessels appearing in the general statement, and may not realize how crushing a disproportion really exists, especially if he is not thoroughly aware of our lack of everything that is necessary for a naval war, such as supplies, ammunition, coal, etc. We have nothing at all. If this fear of mine is well founded, I think it is of the greatest importance that the whole council of ministers without exception be fully and clearly informed of our terrible position, so that there may not remain the least doubt that the war will simply lead us to a terrible disaster, followed by a humiliating peace and the most frightful ruin; for which reason it is necessary not only to avoid the war but to find some solution which will render it impossible in the future. If this is not done, the more time is spent, the worse will be the final result, whether it is peace or war.

"From this reasoning, as clear as daylight to me, it appears that since we can not go to war without meeting with a certain and frightful disaster, and since we can not treat directly with the United States, whose bad faith is notorious, perhaps there is nothing left for us to do but to settle the dispute through arbitration or mediation, provided the enemy accepts. However, this order of considerations does not come within my sphere of duty, which, as the chief of the squadron, is limited to reporting the state of military affairs and then carrying out the orders of the Government. The latter, however, must be fully informed of the situation. Before dropping this subject, I must insist that perhaps it would be well for me to verbally inform the members of the Cabinet, and to say that I am ready to start at the first intimation.

"Concerning the available forces and what may be expected of them: I will be very glad if Ansaldo carries out his promise about the 254-mm. guns of the *Colón*. The 14-cm. cartridge cases are absolutely necessary. This vessel has only thirty, and it is to be supposed that the stores of the *Oquendo* and *Vizcaya* are not better supplied. For the present the firm is supplying only one hundred

per week; and supposing that the first ones have already arrived or will arrive in Cadiz one of these days, at this rate we won't have finished until October. Then they have to be charged, therefore they can never be ready in time for the present conflict. I thought I would have the first ones by January, and I will not have them until April. The engines of the *Pelayo* are ready and the vessel can sail, but how about the secondary battery and the armored redoubt? These will not be ready. If the old battery could be mounted! But I doubt it; the ports will not permit it. I have heard it said that the crew which brought the *Pelayo* was taken from the *Vitoria*, which is another proof of our excessive poverty. It will be very well if the *Carlos V* is soon ready, but I understand that the 10-cm. battery has not yet been mounted, and then the trials are to be made.

"I never had great confidence in the purchasing of vessels. Too much fuss is made over every detail by ignorant people. It was through this that we lost the *Garibaldi*, and now we have lost the Brazilian cruisers. In fact, we have only secured the *Colón*, an excellent ship, but which has not yet arrived, and the *Valdes*. And supposing that we had everything our own way, and that Providence should grant us a victory, which is highly improbable, we would then find ourselves in the condition explained in my last, and which it is not necessary to repeat. It only rests for me now to be informed of the destination of the fleet. I believe the *Teresa* ought to be in Cadiz, where the cartridge cases are to be recharged, and she could sail as soon as all her guns were mounted.

"I will insist no more, but the voice of my conscience, animated by my love for my country, tells me that in saying this I am fulfilling my unavoidable duty."

CONDITION OF THE FLEET IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE WAR.

In the month of April, shortly before the war, Cervera wrote:

"My fears are realized. The conflict is coming fast upon us; and the *Colón* has not received her big guns; the *Carlos V* has not been delivered, and her 10-cm. artillery is not yet mounted; the *Pelayo* is not ready for want of finishing her redoubt, and, I believe, her secondary battery; the *Vitoria* has no artillery, and of the *Numancia* we had better not speak.

"But after all I am glad the end is coming. The country can stand this state of affairs no longer, and any arrangement will be a good one, however bad it looks, if it comes without our having to lament a great disaster, as may happen if we go to war with a few half-armed vessels, and without want of means and excess of incumbrances."

A few days afterwards he wrote:

"On account of the general anxiety it is very important to think of what is to be done, so that, if the case arises, we may act rapidly and with some chance of efficiency, and not be groping about in the dark, or like Don Quixote, go out to fight windmills and come back with broken heads.

"If our naval forces were superior to those of the United States, the question would be an easy one. All we would have to do would be to bar their way. But on the contrary our forces are very inferior to theirs. To endeavor to bar their way, which could only be done by giving them a decisive naval battle, would be the greatest of follies. That would simply mean a sure defeat, which would leave us at the mercy of the enemy, who would easily take a good position in the Canaries, establish there a base of operations, crush our commerce, and safely bombard our maritime cities. It is therefore absolutely necessary to decide what we are going to do, and without disclosing our proposed movements, be in a position to act when the time comes.

"This was the substance of my telegram, and my ideas have not changed since then. If we are caught without a war plan, there will be vacillations and doubts; and, after defeat, there may come humiliation and shame."

On the eve of the war Cervera justly lamented the lack of a plan as follows:

"I regret very much to have to sail without having agreed upon some plan, even in general lines, for which purpose I repeatedly requested permission to go to Madrid. From the bulk of the telegrams received I think I see that the government persists in the idea of sending the little squadron (torpedo-boat flotilla) to Cuba. That seems to me a very risky adventure, which may cost us very dear, for the loss of our flotilla and the defeat of our squadron in the Caribbean Sea entails a great danger for the Canaries, and perhaps the bombardment of our coast cities. I do not mention the fate of the island of Cuba because I have anticipated it long ago. A naval defeat would only precipitate its ultimate loss, while if left to defend itself with its present means, perhaps it would give the Americans some annoyance. We must not deceive ourselves concerning the strength of our fleet. If our correspondence of the last two months is looked over it will be seen not that I have been a prophet, but that I have fallen short of the true mark. Let us not have any illusions as to what we can do."

The last documents relating to the sailing of the fleet from Cape Verde are the most interesting. They show what was the condition of the vessels on the 19th of April, the day before the rupture of relations. Admiral Cervera wrote from Saint Vincent, Cape Verde:

"The boilers of the *Ariete* are practically out of service, so that this vessel, instead of being an element of power, is the nightmare of the fleet. She could only be used for port defense. The boilers of the *Azor* are eleven years old, and are of the locomotive type. As for the *Furor* and *Terror*, their bow plates give as soon as they are in a sea way, and some of their frames have been broken. The *Plutón* had an accident of this kind when coming from England, and had her bows strengthened at Ferrol.

"I do not know whether the port of San Juan de Puerto Rico affords good protection for the fleet. If it does not, and if the port of Mayaguez can not be effectively closed, the fleet would be in a most unfavorable position. However, before forming a judgment, I shall await the arrival of the *Vizcaya*, whose captain, Eulate, is thoroughly acquainted with Puerto Rico. I am constantly preoccupied about the Canaries. It will be necessary to close and fortify the port of Graciosa Island, as well as the island commanding the port of La Luz in Grand Canary.

"The idea of sending the fleet to Cuba seems to have been abandoned, I believe very wisely.

"Concerning Puerto Rico, I have often wondered whether it would be wise to accumulate there all our forces, and I do not think so. If Puerto Rico is faithful, it will not be such an easy job for the Yankees; if it is not faithful, it will inevitably follow the same fate as Cuba, at least as regards us.

"On the other hand, I am very much afraid for the Philippines and the Canaries, as I have said before; and above all, the possibility of a bombardment of our coast, which is not impossible, considering the audacity of the Yankees, and counting, as they do, with four or five vessels of higher speed than our own. For all these reasons, I am doubtful as to what it would be best for me to do; and I will not take any decision without the opinion of the council of captains, as prescribed by the ordinances.

"I leave this letter open until to-morrow, in case something should happen.

"I have just now been informed that the *Vizcaya* and *Oquendo* are in sight. I have had the pleasure of seeing them come in and of greeting their captains. The crews are in the best of health and spirits, but the *Vizcaya* needs docking badly. During the trip from Puerto Rico she burned 200 tons more than the *Oquendo*, which means a diminution of her speed of from 3 to 5 knots according to my reckoning, and a diminution of her sphere of action of from 25 to 35 per cent, thus losing the advantage of speed. Both are now coaling, but it is a long job, for, unfortunately, we do not feel at home here. We are indeed unlucky!"

COUNCIL OF WAR OF THE COMMANDERS OF THE FLEET.

It is well known that before the sailing of the squadron the commanders of the vesels held a council of war on board the *Colón*, on April 21.

This is what Cervera wrote:

"The council lasted nearly four hours. The prevailing spirit was of the purest discipline, characterized by the high spirit which animates the whole fleet, and especially the distinguished commanders, who are an honor to Spain and the navy, and whom it is my fortune to have as companions in these critical circumstances. The first and natural desire expressed by all was to go resolutely in quest of the enemy, and to surrender their lives on the altar of the mother country; but the vision of this same mother country abandoned, insulted, and trod upon by the enemy, proud of our defeat—for nothing else can be expected by going to meet them on their own ground with our inferior forces—forced them to see that such sacrifice would not only be useless but harmful, since it would place the mother country in the hands of an insolent and proud enemy, and God only knows what the consequences might be. I could see the struggle in their minds between these conflicting considerations. All of them loathe the idea of not going immediately in search of the enemy, and finishing once and for all. But, as I said before, the specter of the country violated by the enemy rose above all other considerations, and, inspiring themselves with that courage which consists in braving criticism and perhaps the sarcasm and accusations of the ignorant masses, which know nothing about war in general and naval warfare in particular, and which believe that the *Alfonso XIII* or the *Cristina* can be pitted against the *Iowa* or *Massachusetts*, they expressly and energetically declared that the interests of the mother country demanded this sacrifice from us.

"One of the captains had certain scruples about expressing his opinion, saying that he would do what the Government of His Majesty should be pleased to order; but as all of us, absolutely all, shared these sentiments—it is hardly necessary to say—his scruples were soon overcome. Another of the captains, certainly not the most enthusiastic, but who may be said to have represented the average opinion prevailing in the council, has written, by my order, his ideas, which reflect, better than I could express them, the opinions of all. This document exactly expresses the opinion which prevailed in the meeting.

"An act was signed in which it was stated that, having met by order of the commander in chief and under his presidency, the second in command and the captains of the vessels, the president submitted to discussion the following point:

"'Under the present circumstances of the mother country, is it expedient that this fleet should go at once to America, or should it stay to protect our coasts and the Canaries, and to provide for any contingency?'

"Several opinions were exchanged concerning the probable consequences of our campaign in the West Indies; the great deficiencies of our fleet compared with that of the enemy were made manifest, as well as the very scanty resources which the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico are able to offer for the purpose of establishing a base of operations. In consideration of this, and the grave consequences for the nation of a defeat of our fleet in Cuba, thus leaving unobstructed the coming of the enemy against the Peninsula and adjacent islands, it was unanimously agreed to call the attention of the Government, by means of a telegram, in which the commander in chief of the squadron, in agreement with the second in command and the commanders of the vessels, suggested to go to the Canaries. The *Ariete*—it said—boilers in bad condition, those of the *Azor* very old, *Vizcaya* needs docking to paint bottom if speed is to be maintained. Canaries would be protected against a rapid descent of the enemy, and all the forces would be in a position, if necessary, promptly to come to the defense of the mother country."

OPINION OF SEÑOR CONCAS.

The opinion of Captain Victor M. Concas, commander of the battle ship *Infanta Maria Teresa*, concerning the subjects presented for discussion by the admiral of the fleet at the council of war held on board the *Cristóbal Colón*, was as follows:

"(1) That the naval forces of the United States are so immensely superior to our own in number and class of vessels, armor and artillery, and in preparations made—besides the advantage given them by the insurrection in Cuba, the possible one in Puerto Rico, and the one still existing in the East—that they have sufficient forces to attack us in the West Indies, in the Peninsula and adjacent islands, and in the Philippines. That since no attention has been paid to that archipelago, which was perhaps the most urgent, in order to reduce our vulnerable points, and which could have been done with a single battle ship, to-day any division of our limited forces and any separation from the European seas involves a strategic mistake which would bring war to the Peninsula, a frightful disaster to our coasts, the payment of large ransoms, and perhaps the loss of some island. As soon as this fleet leaves for the West Indies it is evident—as has happened already more than once (sic)—that the American flying squadron will sail for Europe; and even if its purpose was only to make a raid or a demonstration

against our coasts, the just alarm of all Spain would cause the enforced return of this fleet, although too late to prevent the enemy from reaping the fruits of its easy victory.

"The only three vessels of war remaining for the defense of the Peninsula, the *Carlos V*, the *Pelayo*, whose repairs are not yet finished, and the *Alfonso XIII*, of very little speed, are not enough for the defense of Spain, and in no way for that of the Canaries. The yacht *Giralda* and the steamers *Germania* and *Normania* are vessels of no fighting qualities and add no strength to our navy.

"(2) The plan of defending the island of Puerto Rico, abandoning Cuba to its fate, is absolutely impossible, because, if the American fleet purposely destroys a city of the last-named island, in spite of all the plans of the government upon the subject, and even if it should be the maddest thing in the world, the government itself would be forced by public opinion to send this fleet against the Americans, under the conditions and at the point the latter might choose.

"(3) Even deciding upon the defense of Puerto Rico alone, the trip across to-day, after the practical declaration of war, without a military port where the fleet might reorganize itself on its arrival, and without an auxiliary fleet to keep the enemy busy—who, I suppose, will make St. Thomas its base of operations—is a strategic error the more deplorable because there have been months and even years of time to accumulate the necessary forces in the West Indies. It seems probable, judging from the information acquired, that the supplies accumulated at St. Thomas are intended by the enemy to establish a base of operations in the vicinity of our unprotected Vieques (Vierges). For all these reasons the responsibility of the trip must remain entirely with the government.

"(4) Adding these three battle ships and the *Cristóbal Colón*, without its big guns, to the two remaining in the Peninsula and to the few and old torpedo boats which we have left, it is possible to defend our coast from the Guadiana to Cape Creus, including the Balearic and the Canaries, thanks to the distance of the enemy from its base of operations. This defense, however, will have to be a very energetic one if the enemy brings its best ships to bear on us.

"(5) It is very regrettable that there are not enough vessels to cover all points at one time; but duty and true patriotism compel us to clearly express the resources which the country gave us, and the necessities which present circumstances bring on the country in danger.

"(6) Lastly, I believe that the military situation should be made known to the minister of marine, reiterating our profoundest subordination to his orders, and our firm purpose most energetically to

carry out the plans of operations he may communicate to these forces. But after pointing out the probable consequences, the responsibility must remain with the government."

FROM CAPE VERDE.

Finally, on April 22, the Admiral said:

"It is impossible for me to give an idea of the surprise and astonishment experienced by all on the receipt of the order to sail. Indeed that surprise is well justified, for nothing can be expected of this expedition except the total destruction of the fleet or its hasty and demoralizing return; when here in Spain it might be the safeguard of the nation.

"You talk about plans, and in spite of all my efforts to have some laid out, as it was wise and prudent, my desires have been disappointed. How can it be said that I have been supplied with everything I asked for? The *Colón* has not yet her big guns, and I asked for the bad ones if there were no others. The 14-cm. ammunition, with the exception of about 300 shots, is bad. The defective guns of the *Vizcaya* and *Oquendo* have not been changed. The cartridge cases of the *Colón* can not be recharged. We have not a single Bustamante torpedo. There is no plan or concert, which I so much desired and called for so often. The repairs of the servomotors of the *Infanta Maria Teresa* and the *Vizcaya* were only made after they had left Spain. In short, this is already a disaster, and it is to be feared that it will be a more frightful one before long. And perhaps everything could be changed yet! But I suppose it is too late now for anything that is not the ruin and the desolation of our country.

"The *Vizcaya* can no longer steam, and she is only a boil in the body of the fleet.

"But I insist no more. The act has been done, and I will try to find the best way out of this direful enterprise."

The following are the last letters we know of:

"SAINT VINCENT (CAPE VERDE), *April 24, 1898.*

"I have just received the telegram ordering us to start, and I have given orders to tranship from the *Cadiz* to these vessels coal, supplies, crews, and the artillery of the destroyers, which was on board the *Cadiz*.

"I intended to sail without finishing the provisioning of the vessels, but since the *Cadiz* is to stay, I have decided to ship as much coal as possible. I will try to sail to-morrow.

"As the act has been consummated, I will not insist upon my opinion of it. May God grant that I be mistaken! You see I

was right when I said that by the end of April the *Pelayo*, *Carlos V*, *Vitoria*, and *Numancia* would not be finished; the *Colón* would not have its big guns, unless we took the bad ones, and we would not have the new 14-cm. ammunition with which to fight, etc.

"With an easy conscience I go to the sacrifice, but I can not understand that decision of the navy* general officers against my opinions.

"I have been informed of the sailing of a cargo of coal for Puerto Rico, where it is supposed to arrive on the 11th or 12th of May, but I am afraid lest it should fall into the hands of the enemy.

"It is a mistake to suppose that I can accept or avoid a naval battle at will. The *Vizcaya*, on account of her stay in Havana and the nine months without cleaning her bottom, is nothing but a buoy, and I can not abandon her."

ONE TELEGRAM FROM VILLAAMIL.

"AT SEA, *May 5, 1898.*

"DEAR JUAN: To complete our collection of documents, I think you should have the inclosed copy of a private telegram from Villaamil to Sagasta. I send you this letter by means of two destroyers which I am sending to Martinique in search of news. All is well on board, and the spirit is excellent. We shall see what God has in store for us. The final result is not doubtful, but if only we could start with a good lucky stroke! God be with us! Good-by. Regards to your folk, etc.

"PASCUAL" (Cervera's first name).

[Copy of Telegram.]

April 22, 1898.

PRAXEDES SAGASTA, *Madrid:*

In view of importance to the country of destination of this fleet, I deem it expedient you should know, through a friend who does not fear censure, that, while as seamen we are all ready to die with honor in the fulfillment of duty, I think it undoubted that the sacrifice of these naval forces will be as certain as it will be fruitless and useless for the termination of the war, if the representations repeatedly made by admiral to minister of marine are not taken into consideration.

F. VILLAAMIL.

* In a council of eighteen general officers, fourteen voted for the immediate sailing of Cervera's fleet from Cape Verde. Generals Gomez, Imaz, and Lazaga voted against it until the reenforcement of the fleet by the *Pelayo*, *Carlos V*, *Alfonso XIII*, and *Lepanto* and the three destroyers remaining in the Peninsula. Generals Butler and Mozo shared this opinion conditionally, subordinating it to the decision of the government.

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